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Sen. Van Woerkom shepherds phosphorous limits in Senate

LANSING — Michigan would have some of the toughest phosphorous regulations in the country under legislation shepherded through a Senate committee today by Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom, R-Norton Shores.

The Senate Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism Committee, chaired by Van Woerkom, approved Senate Bill 840 on a bipartisan vote, sending it to the full Senate. The measure, introduced by Sen. Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland, would establish statewide limits on the amount of phosphorous in fertilizer.

“Michigan’s lakes and streams are being threatened by weeds caused by too much phosphorous in the water,” Van Woerkom said. “This plan protects our environment while balancing the needs of homeowners and lawn-care businesses.”

Besides limiting the phosphorous content of fertilizer, the legislation would prohibit fertilizer from being applied:

- Within 10 feet from waters unless approved by the state;
- To soil that is frozen or saturated to field capacity; and,
- In a way that spreads fertilizer on roadways, parking lots, concrete, or similar areas that prevent the infiltration of water into the soil.

Van Woerkom’s support of the legislation comes as Muskegon County is considering regulations to address phosphorus in lawn and garden fertilizers. Some local leaders have said phosphorous runoff promotes excessive algae and vegetation growth, affecting area waterways.

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